

Memento for Sister Anna Mae Golden, CSC

(Sister M. Joseph Anita)

April 28, 1930 – February 14, 2019

These memories were shared by Sister Mary Ellen Vaughan, CSC, at the funeral on February 21, 2019.

Within each of us, in every person and in every form of creation, is embedded the spark of Divinity, a shard of God. It's this divine spark that emerges in amazing abundance and diversity in our universe to reveal God. In humans, we might call it a person's special gift, talent, or a unique or particular way of being in life. I think THE divine spark at Anna Mae Golden's core, that special dimension of God that was hers to reveal in our world, was her ability to teach—to break through barriers and obstacles so that young people might learn what they thought they never could. It was hers to reveal God's goodness and love through her teaching, mentoring, guiding and encouraging.

Sister Anna Mae Golden, CSC, known in her early years in religious life as Sister M. Joseph Anita, CSC, was the first child of Ethel and William Golden. Bill Golden had an automobile dealership in the Washington area, and Ethel was a budget analyst for the federal government. Anna Mae was born in Takoma Park, Maryland on April 28, 1930. Eighteen months later, her sister Betty arrived. Over their years of growing up, and through college at Dunbarton College of the Holy Cross in Washington, D. C., the two sisters were inseparable. Anna Mae was known as quiet, serious and studious; Betty was the extroverted, bubbly one. They complemented each other and they loved each other.

After attending public elementary and high schools, Anna Mae went to Dunbarton College of the Holy Cross in 1947. It is there she met the Sisters of the Holy Cross and had her initial sense of call to religious life. Her strong commitment to serve grew out of both her family life and her years at Dunbarton. Anna Mae graduated in 1951 with a Bachelor of Arts degree, majoring in mathematics, and applied to enter the Sisters of the Holy Cross. Her decision met with reservations from her parents; however, Anna Mae persisted and arrived at Saint Mary's on August 1, 1951. As many of our Sisters, her first experience in teaching came during her early years in formation when

she was assigned to teach fifth grade at Saint Mary's Campus School—her sole experience in elementary education. After making her initial profession of vows in February 1954, she was sent to Brookline in the Boston area to teach at both Cardinal Cushing College and Holy Cross Academy. The following summer Anna Mae's mother died unexpectedly. In Anna Mae's words, her mother's death "changed her family's world." A year later, her sister Betty married Jack Creamer; and Anna Mae instantly became part of Betty and Jack's family. Over many years she thoroughly enjoyed her visits to their home in the Washington area and with their extended family. Anna Mae and Betty's deep friendship over a lifetime ended when Betty died of pulmonary disease at the age of 68. Anna Mae was here at Saint Mary's at that time, serving on the General Council. Her only sister's death was an overwhelming loss for Anna Mae and left a hole in her heart that was never completely healed.

Her niece Monica and Monica's two daughters continued to be such an important part of Anna Mae's life. Monica graduated from both The Academy of the Holy Cross in Kensington, Maryland, and Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana. Her daughters were also grads of the academy. Anna Mae was so proud of them, and this blending of her own family with her Holy Cross family.

Anna Mae was a private person. Many who shared memories of her commented on this trait. She rarely talked about herself or her feelings. It seems the window into her soul that allowed some of us glimpses of who she was came through her ministry life and her remarkable years of service doing so many things in so many different places. Her ministry data form revealed she had served in 26 different ministries in 10 places for over 55 years of active ministry. Those years would be marked by a breadth of service in both the worlds of education and health care, in teaching and administering, in leadership and in governance.

I invite you to let your imagination move back and forth across this country and world as I give you a brief panoramic view of Anna Mae's ministry life:

Brookline, Massachusetts: Cardinal Cushing College and Holy Cross Academy, teaching math

Washington, D.C.: Mackin High School, teaching math

Riverside, New Jersey: Holy Cross High School, teaching

Washington, D. C.: Dunbarton College of the Holy Cross, teaching
Alexandria, Virginia: St. Mary's Academy, teaching and then back to
Brookline, Massachusetts: Cardinal Cushing College, teaching and academic
dean

Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana: director of admissions
Kensington, Maryland: The Academy of the Holy Cross, teaching and then
principal.

And after an interval completing her doctorate in education at the University
of Maryland:

Saint Mary's College, Notre Dame, Indiana: institutional planning and
teaching math

Rome Italy: associate director of Saint Mary's College Rome Program

St. Joseph's Health Care Group, South Bend, Indiana: vice president of
mission development

St. Mary's Academy, Alexandria, Virginia: president

Rome, Italy: administrative assistant, Saint Mary's College Rome Program

Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross, Notre Dame, Indiana: General
Council

Church of Loretto, Notre Dame, Indiana: volunteer sacristan

Saint Joseph's Hospital, South Bend, Indiana: patient visitor

Academy of the Holy Cross, Kensington, Maryland: tutor and, finally,

Saint Mary's Convent, Notre Dame, Indiana: ministry of prayer

Woven through these years of ministry were other pauses for education and
world travel. Anna Mae had a thirst for learning – certainly through books and
classes, but even more through national and international travel. She received
10 National Science Foundation grants for summer study that allowed her to
study in various places in the United States as well as across the world. She
thoroughly appreciated her opportunities to travel and experience diverse
cultures during the years she was in congregational leadership.

Anna Mae served with faithfulness, perseverance, energy and unwavering
commitment. Hers was a lifetime of response to need, wherever that need was.
She once articulated her philosophy of life in an interview when she served on

the board of Mount Carmel Health System in Columbus, Ohio. Anna Mae said, “I believe that we should give all that we have to any task and be responsible for seeing it to completion.” And she did just that.

This ministry history gives us information about who Anna Mae was. Perhaps a few wonderful stories might better show how that spark of divine life emerged through her.

All through these years of ministry and education, Anna Mae always made it a priority to tutor young people struggling with math. She was able to unlock doors for them.

Sister Brenda Cousins, CSC, remembers Anna Mae getting her and her classmates through algebra II at Saint Mary’s Academy in Alexandria, Virginia. “We were having a terrible time,” Brenda recounted. “It was so difficult. We just couldn’t get it.” After trying a variety of strategies, Anna Mae decided to throw away the book and teach them her way. And it worked! They “got it!”

Upon receiving word of Anna Mae’s death, Sister Margaret Mary Nimo, CSC, from Ghana, emailed a moving reflection from the time when she and Anna Mae shared community here in South Bend on Blaine Avenue and also were both at Holy Cross College – Anna Mae as academic dean, and Maggie studying. I quote an excerpt, from Maggie’s message:

“Anna Mae was a quiet woman of substance. She challenged me a great deal; she was a loving and understanding woman. She made mathematics easy for me when I couldn’t figure things out.She took me to Washington, D.C., one summer to her sister Betty’s home. She showed me where she grew up and went to college. That had such a lasting impact on my life because as an African woman it meant she allowed me into her life and wanted me to know who she was.At my final vows in Ghana, she danced to the Asante Kete drums into the late night.”

Maria Galicia, one of our pall bearers today and a beloved companion to so many sisters, added another vivid memory that occurred during Anna Mae’s tenure on the General Council in the early 2000s. On Maria’s first day working here, and with limited ability to speak English, she was confronted by a sister who was critical of her and yelled at her, leaving Maria in tears. Maria decided she could never work in a place like this, quit, and was out in the parking lot getting into her car to leave forever. Somehow Anna Mae got word of this incident and tracked Maria to her car. “No. You can’t leave,” Anna Mae

pleaded. “We need you here.” And now 17 years later, Maria thanks Anna Mae for helping her keep the best job of her life.

Anna Mae’s return to Saint Mary’s for care in 2009 was a major challenge for her. Her illness was progressing and causing her frequent falls. Her own expectation had been that she would have had many years in the East with family and friends. Life was not turning out that way. As she struggled with the geographic change, she also struggled with the changes in her body and the limitations they were creating. Her mind was still traveling a mile a minute. Her body could not keep pace. Anna Mae worked hard to process those feelings, and move through the grieving that was inevitable. She did not want to be bitter or resentful. She wanted to use whatever potential she did have. It’s like that divine spark of life impelling her to teach was still alive within her. She just could not figure out how to express it.

As we celebrate her life today, perhaps this quintessential teacher would be asking each of us, prodding us beyond boundaries, to ask ourselves what that divine spark within might be impelling us to do?